

Guidelines for School Health Programs to Promote Physical Activity: Summary

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/Division of Adolescent and School Health

Young people can build healthy bodies and establish healthy lifestyles by including physical activity in their daily lives. However, many young people are not physically active on a regular basis, and physical activity declines dramatically during adolescence. School and community programs can help young people get active and stay active.

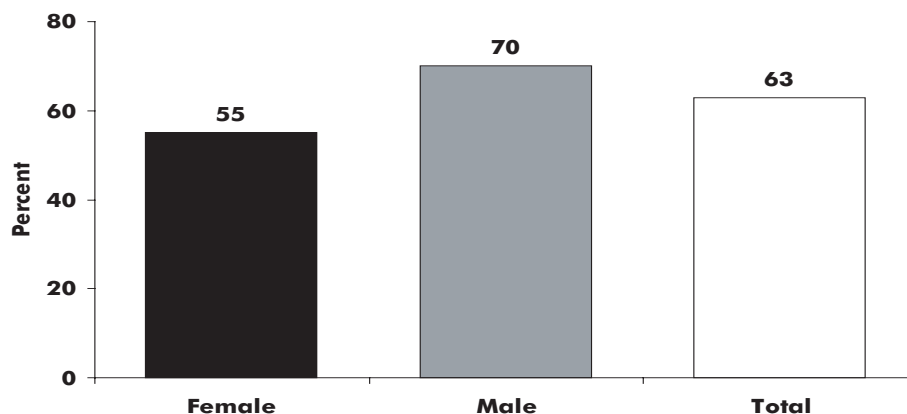
Benefits of Regular Physical Activity

Studies show that regular physical activity in childhood and adolescence:¹

- Improves strength and endurance.
- Helps build healthy bones and muscles.
- Helps control weight.
- Reduces anxiety and stress and increases self-esteem.
- May improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

In addition, young people say they like physical activity because it is fun; they do it with friends; and it helps them learn skills, stay in shape, and look better.

Percentage of High School Students Who Participate in Vigorous Physical Activity,*² by Sex



* Physical activities that caused sweating and hard breathing, that were performed for 20 minutes or more on at least 3 of the 7 days preceding the survey.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

May 2004



Consequences of Physical Inactivity

- The percentage of young people who are overweight has tripled in the past 20 years.³
- Inactivity and poor diet cause at least 400,000 deaths a year in the United States. Only tobacco use causes more preventable deaths.⁴
- Adults who are less active are at greater risk of dying of heart disease and developing diabetes, colon cancer, and high blood pressure.⁵

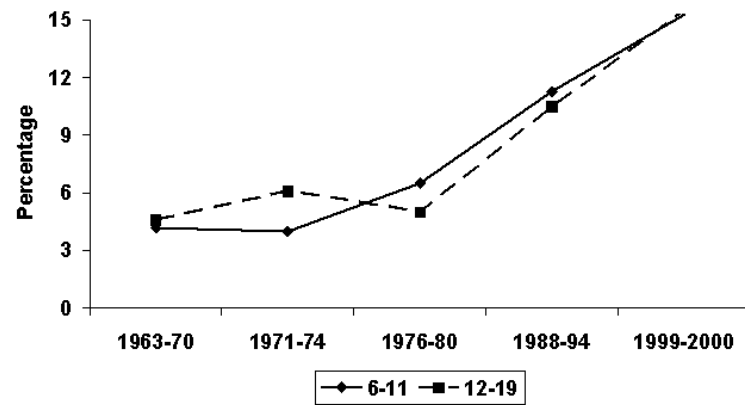
Overweight Among Youth

- The prevalence of overweight among children aged 6-11 has more than doubled in the past 20 years, increasing from 7% in 1980 to 15% in 2000.³
- Children and adolescents who are overweight are more likely to be overweight or obese as adults; ^{6,7,8} overweight adults are at increased risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes, some types of cancer, and gallbladder disease.⁵

Physical Activity Among Young People

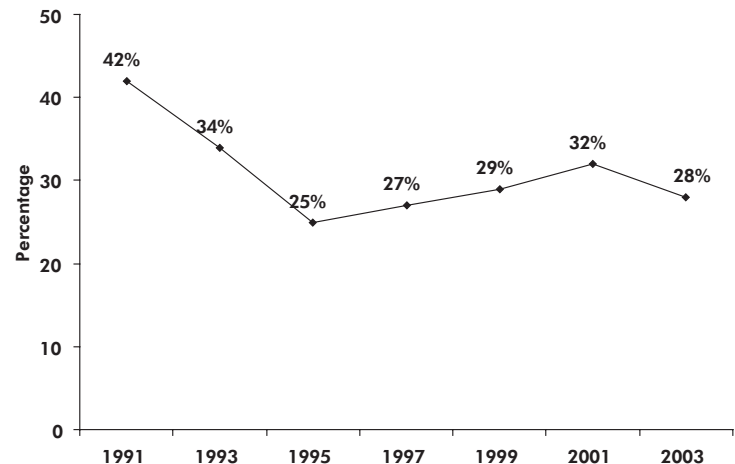
- Sixty-five percent of high school students participate in vigorous physical activity on 3 or more days a week, and 26% participate in moderate physical activity on 5 or more days a week.²
- Nearly 70% of 9th graders but only 55% of 12th graders participate in vigorous physical activity on a regular basis.²
- Fifty-six percent of high school students are enrolled in a physical education class; daily participation in physical education classes by high school students dropped from 42% in 1991 to 25% in 1995, and has remained stable at that level until 2003 (28%).²
- Male high school students are significantly more likely than female students to regularly participate in vigorous physical activity (70% vs. 55%) and in moderate physical activity (27% vs. 22%), and to participate in team sports (64% vs. 51%).²

Percentage of Young People Who Are Overweight*³



*Overweight is defined by the age- and sex- specific 95th percentile of body mass index.

Percentage of High School Students Who Attended Physical Education Classes Daily, 1991-2003²



How Much Physical Activity Do Young People Need?

Everyone can benefit from a moderate amount of physical activity on most, if not all, days of the week. Young people should select activities they enjoy that fit into their daily lives. Examples of moderate activity include:

- Walking 2 miles in 30 minutes or running 1½ miles in 15 minutes.
- Bicycling 5 miles in 30 minutes or 4 miles in 15 minutes.
- Dancing fast for 30 minutes or jumping rope for 15 minutes.
- Playing basketball for 15–20 minutes or volleyball for 45 minutes.

Increasing the frequency, time, or intensity of physical activity can bring even more health benefits—up to a point. Too much physical activity can lead to injuries and other health problems.

CDC's Guidelines for Schools to Promote Lifelong Physical Activity

CDC's *Guidelines for School and Community Programs to Promote Lifelong Physical Activity Among Young People* were developed in collaboration with experts from other federal agencies, state agencies, universities, voluntary organizations, and professional associations. They are based on an extensive review of research and practice.

Key Principles

The guidelines state that physical activity programs for young people are most likely to be effective when they:

- Emphasize enjoyable participation in physical activities that are easily done throughout life.
- Offer a diverse range of noncompetitive and competitive activities appropriate for different ages and abilities.
- Give young people the skills and confidence they need to be physically active.
- Promote physical activity through all components of a coordinated school health program and develop links between school and community programs.

Recommendations

The guidelines include 10 recommendations for ensuring quality physical activity programs.

1 Policy

Establish policies that promote enjoyable, lifelong physical activity.

- Schools should require daily physical education and comprehensive health education (including lessons on physical activity) in grades K–12.
- Schools and community organizations should provide adequate funding, equipment, and supervision for programs that meet the needs and interests of all students.

2 Environment

Provide physical and social environments that encourage and enable young people to engage in safe and enjoyable physical activity.

- Provide access to safe spaces and facilities and implement measures to prevent activity-related injuries and illnesses.

- Provide school time, such as recess, for unstructured physical activity, such as jumping rope.
- Discourage the use or withholding of physical activity as punishment.
- Provide health promotion programs for school faculty and staff.

3 Physical Education

Implement sequential physical education curricula and instruction in grades K–12 that:

- Emphasize enjoyable participation in lifetime physical activities such as walking and dancing, not just competitive sports.
- Help students develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to adopt and maintain a physically active lifestyle.
- Follow the National Standards for Physical Education.
- Keep students active for most of class time.

4 Health Education

Implement health education curricula and instruction that:

- Feature active learning strategies and follow the National Health Education Standards.
- Help students develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

5 Extracurricular Activities

Provide extracurricular physical activity programs that offer diverse, developmentally appropriate activities—both noncompetitive and competitive—for all students.

6 Family Involvement

Encourage parents and guardians to support their children's participation in physical activity, to be physically active role models, and to include physical activity in family events.

7 Training

Provide training to enable teachers, coaches, recreation and health care staff, and other school and community personnel to promote enjoyable, lifelong physical activity among young people.

8 Health Services

Assess the physical activity patterns of young people, refer them to appropriate physical activity programs, and advocate for physical activity instruction and programs for young people.

9 Community Programs

Provide a range of developmentally appropriate community sports and recreation programs that are attractive to all young people.

10 Evaluation

Regularly evaluate physical activity instruction, programs, and facilities.



References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Physical activity and health: A report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996.
2. Grunbaum JA, Kann L, Kinchen S, Ross J, Hawkins J, Lowry R, et al. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2003. *Mortality and Morbidity Weekly Report* 2004;53(SS-2):1-95.
3. Ogden CL, Flegal KM, Carroll MD, Johnson CL. Prevalence and trends in overweight among U.S. children and adolescents, 1999-2000. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2002;288:1728–1732.
4. Mokdad AH, Marks JS, Stroup DF, Gerberding JL. Actual causes of death in the United States, 2000. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2004;291:1238-1245.
5. Public Health Service. The Surgeon General's Report on Nutrition and Health. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, 1988. DHHS publication no. (PHS) 88-50210.

For Additional Information Contact:

CDC, Division of Adolescent and School Health
4770 Buford Highway, NE
Mail Stop K-12
Atlanta, Georgia 30341-3717
888-231-6405
E-mail: HealthyYouth@cdc.gov